

Getting Up When You're Knocked Down, Part 3 - 1 Corinthians 4:3 – August 3rd, 2014

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series I've titled, "Getting Up When You're Knocked Down." (Part 3 - Verse 3 - August 3)
- What we've seen in just the first two verses has been most foundational in the sense that we can now start a solid and steady building on it.
- More specifically, these first two principles provide for us that much needed solid foundation upon which to build the principles that follow.

1. Maintain a servant's humility (Verse 1)

- Here Paul says, first and foremost, men should regard us and know us by our humility as servants, or under-rowers, in the lowest position.

2. Remain faithful as a steward (Verse 2)

- Paul takes it a step further saying that in addition to our being known as humble servants, we should also be proven as faithful stewards.

3. Don't let destructive criticism take you down (Verse 3a)

(3) I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court...

- v3a Paul didn't let the criticism and unfair judgment of these carnal Corinthians affect him. He cared very little what they thought about him.
- For Paul to mention this would seem to indicate that he had come under the constant criticism and unfair judgment from these Christians.
- Actually, Paul refers to this criticism and judgment in his second letter to this church in Corinth and in so doing gives us some insight into it.

2 Corinthians 10:9-10 NIV (9) I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. (10) For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing."

- Church historians have recorded traditional accounts of just Paul's personal appearance about which Paul himself says was unimpressive.

One commentator notes how that, "...[we] must bear in mind the sad probability that there were periods of St. Paul's career at which, owing to the disfigurement wrought by the rages of his affliction, we should not have like to gaze upon his face. In the sixth century John of Antioch, commonly called Malala, writes that 'Paul was in person round-shouldered, with a sprinkling of grey on his head and beard, with an aquiline nose, greyish eyes, meeting eyebrows, with a mixture of pale and red in his complexion.' ...Nicophorus, writing in the fifteenth century, says, 'Paul was short, and dwarfish in stature, and, as it were, crooked in person and slightly bent. His face was pale, ...He was bald-headed, ...His nose was prominent.' ...In the Acts of Paul and Thekla, ... he is described as short, bald, bow-legged, with meeting eyebrows, hook-nosed, full of grace. ...We may conclude that this was the case from many of the circumstances of his intercourse with men and churches, and also from the fact that the rude inhabitants of Lystra take him – before he had yet attained to middle age, and before his body had been so rudely battered as it was by many subsequent miseries."

- Here's the point, if we're all honest with ourselves and others, we'd have to admit that we're hypersensitive about our personal appearance.
- Of all the things that have the propensity to take us down, criticism about our personal appearance would arguably be the most destructive.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest if the truth were known most of our time and money is spent out of fear of what others may think of us.

- It's for this reason that letting what others think about us outwardly can be so destructive in taking us down inwardly, and Satan knows this.
- Have you ever wondered why others who criticize and judge our outward appearance physically don't criticize our inward heart spiritually?
- The answer is found in 1 Samuel when David is anointed king because man looks on the outward appearance while God looks at the heart.

- The reason I point this out is that this was the Apostle Paul's secret as to why it is that he cared not what others thought or said about him.
- Let me explain, as a humble servant and faithful steward of the Lord and not men, he cared only about what the Lord thought and not man.
- In other words, the Lord saw his heart inwardly, and as such, it invalidated any man's criticism and judgment of his appearance outwardly.

4. Don't let self-condemnation keep you down (Verse 3b)

(3b) ...indeed, I do not even judge myself.

- v3b Paul then goes on to say that in addition to others criticizing and judging him he won't even allow himself to criticize and judge himself.
- That's not to say that we shouldn't examine ourselves rather, it means that we don't have the ability to properly judge and evaluate our self.
- If the criticism and judgment from others has the propensity to take us down, then self-condemnation has the propensity to keep us down.

- While I realize I've brought this up on several occasions prior, I think it's incumbent upon me to once again draw an important distinction.
- Namely, the importance of distinguishing between self-talk, and talking to self. The importance of delineating the two cannot be over stated.
- Here's why, often times, self-talk comes packaged with destructive criticism and condemnation, whereas talking to self does the opposite.

- Here's how I get there, with self-talk we'll either be too hard on ourselves, or we'll be too easy with ourselves, but talking to self we won't.
- By way of an illustration, your self-talk we'll be easy on you eating Butterfingers and Cheesecake by saying, "I will go to the gym tomorrow."
- Or, when it comes to money, it goes like this, self-talk will be hard on you for your compulsive spending by saying, "I just can't tithe today."

- Thank God for the Word of God, which vindicates us vis-à-vis talking to self when I get into the Word, and in turn the Word will get into me.
- Then, when the Word gets into me, it has a good talk with me, and, when it has a good talk with me, it overrides my depressing self-talk.
- In closing, consider David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, in the forty-third Psalm, where his talking to self overrides his oppressive self-talk.

Psalms 43:1-5 NIV Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; rescue me from deceitful and wicked men. (2) You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? (3) Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. (4) Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. (5) Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.